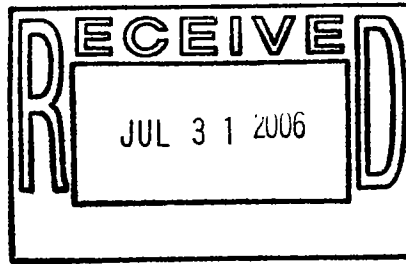


July 15, 2006

Citizens' Health Care
Working Group
7201 Wisconsin Avenue
Suite 575
Bethesda, MD 20814



ATTN: Comments on Interim Recommendations: "Health Care That Works for All Americans"

GENERAL:

The Association of Professional Chaplains (APC) is a national, not-for-profit professional association that advocates for quality, competent spiritual care of all persons in healthcare facilities, long term care units, rehabilitation centers, hospice, the military, corrections, and other specialized settings. Professionally trained board certified chaplains partner with health care providers in improving the understanding of spiritual and cultural issues, beliefs and values that impact patient and family experience of illness, patient safety, quality, access, and communication. The Association of Professional Chaplains is guided by the following foundational Values:

- Dignity and worth of all persons
- Faith as an essential dimension of wholeness
- Spiritual care of persons, communities, organizations and systems
- Inclusivity and diversity
- Justice and equality for all
- Professional competence and ethical practice

The APC advocates for the inclusion of spiritual values on behalf of the multifait religious communities in international, national, state and local health and human welfare programs and services. Our contributions and collaboration are recognized in professional activities and literature of national healthcare groups including the Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American College of Healthcare Executives.

COMMENTS:

We are submitting our comments in response to the Interim Recommendations of the Citizens' Health Care Working Group that was created by the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003, Sec. 1014. We understand the intent of the Act was to provide

the American Public an opportunity to “engage in an informed national public debate to make choices about the services they want covered, what health coverage they want, and how they are willing to pay for coverage”.

We would like to thank the Group for its clear commitment to provide nationwide opportunities for persons to participate in Community Meetings and to articulate their wishes and recommendations. We also applaud the committed work that has resulted in the Interim Recommendations.

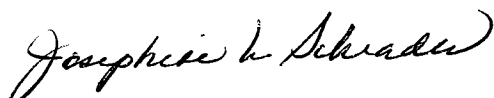
We also commend the Citizen’s Health Care Working Group for including in its recommendations “respectful” and “culturally sensitive” care. It is our belief that such care must involve attention to religious/cultural issues which have always been respected in the American context. Diversity of beliefs and values, particularly in relationship to health and illness, is a key characteristic of the United States population. We strongly urge the Group to continue to emphasize not only the importance of diversity, but the equal importance of understanding its abundant expressions and requiring appropriate response and services.

We believe equal access to healthcare must be the highlight of any recommendations that are made and work that is done. This access must be based in the values of dignity and worth of every person, again including respect of individual and diverse faith, beliefs, and practices. The values of justice and equality demand that all Americans receive the care that they need. We ask the Group to base its recommendations on these values so that all persons, regardless of their income, cultural background, religious beliefs, or other personal characteristics may have access to the same level of health care.

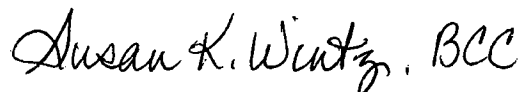
We believe that health goes beyond care of simply the physical. We would encourage the Group to include in its recommendations care for the whole person. This involves attention to mental, emotional, and spiritual health, all of which have been demonstrated in research to have integral connection to physical well being. We request that in its continued work the Group clearly emphasize that whole person care is essential in creating health care that responds to the diverse needs of all Americans.

As an association of highly trained and certified providers of religious, spiritual, and cultural care, the APC recognizes the complex and challenging issues surrounding healthcare. We are committed to offering our professional expertise to the Citizen’s Health Care Working Group as may be helpful in its work.

Thank you for this opportunity for us to provide you with our feedback and review of the Interim Recommendations. We look forward to opportunity for continued collaboration. Do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide more information or engage in additional conversation.



Josephine N. Schrader, CAE, IOM
Executive Director
847-240-1014
jo@professionalchaplains.org



The Rev. Susan K. Wintz, M.Div., BCC
Chair, Commission on Quality in Pastoral Services
602-406-6590
sue.wintz@chw.edu